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**From:** Newton, Cheryl [Newton.Cheryl@epa.gov]  
**Sent:** 9/30/2021 7:04:40 PM  
**To:** Fox, Radhika [Fox.Radhika@epa.gov]; Cisar, Elizabeth [Cisar.Elizabeth@epa.gov]; McLain, Jennifer L. [McLain.Jennifer@epa.gov]; Thompkins, Anita [Thompkins.Anita@epa.gov]; Wehling, Carrie [Wehling.Carrie@epa.gov]; Tejada, Matthew [Tejada.Matthew@epa.gov]; Murray, Regan [Murray.Regan@epa.gov]  
**CC:** Walts, Alan [walts.alan@epa.gov]; Fong, Tera [Fong.Tera@epa.gov]; Nelson, Leverett [nelson.leverett@epa.gov]; Bauer, Candice [bauer.candice@epa.gov]; Kaplan, Robert [kaplan.robert@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** R5 Benton Harbor Update  
**Attachments:** DRAFT IAP - BH TC Actions - OP 1 v4 DRAFT.pdf; FINAL Release, water distribution in Benton Harbor 093021 7a.docx

Good afternoon – Thanks to Elizabeth for setting up a core team check in call tomorrow. In advance of that, I wanted to share a couple of updates and materials we’ve received in the last day or so. As indicated previously, Michigan is standing up an ICS for this effort, to which they’ve invited EPA participation. The attached “DRAFT IAP” document from the first meeting yesterday gives a sense of the draft action plan and structure. Tera rather than Alan will be our lead; Candice is on the Water Sampling Team and our CICs (Janet and Diane) will be part of the community engagement team/box as indicated. We are evaluating where else we may add contacts.

I spoke with Aaron this morning as well. I expressed appreciation for the ICS approach, which would seem to provide a known/effective framework for our cooperative efforts, while I also noted we will continue to have a separate oversight role. A couple more notes from that conversation:

- Also attached is a state press notice on the water distribution. I indicated to Aaron that if the state is continuing to see October 8<sup>th</sup> or whenever the renewed door-to-door filter distribution is complete as the basis for discontinuing bottled water distribution then we may face a gap in our alignment. According to Aaron, Michigan is taking into account all of the existing studies/data available on filters to assume they work as expected, which then informs their position on bottled water being necessary until such time as filters have been distributed though out Benton Harbor. Aaron indicated if on-going sampling or a filter study was to provide new information regarding that assumption, the State would respond accordingly.
- Aaron said that if we are awaiting further data or information from HHS regarding samples, results, protocols, etc., to send him an email and he will run it down. Candace has a DHHS call this afternoon, so we will assess afterward and follow-up with Aaron as needed.
- Aaron more clearly indicated that their focus has been getting bottled water into the community followed by the filter distribution effort, so the earliest we might see a protocol document is tomorrow. Taking everything into account and his conversation with Elizabeth, Alan will be reaching out to Sylvia to discuss whether having the late afternoon call Friday with interested petitioners and the State on the “plans”/materials makes sense or if there’s agreement to target next week. Note there is on-going State engagement with community representatives such as Reverend Pinkney, and the draft Incident Action Plan indicates a water distribution plan by October 1 and also lists as an action to complete an operational filter distribution plan but no date.
- Aaron mentioned the State will be issuing a press release today announcing its standing up a corrosion protection advisory panel, which will provide technical support to EGLE on this subject overall not just in Benton Harbor. EGLE is seeking an EPA ORD representative on this panel. Tera will be reaching out to Regan on this.

Those were the key items from my chat with Aaron. The first bullet is a key discussion point for EPA, which also connects with the draft communications/messages. One last item below is a news article that may be of interest. I hope to be able to attend tomorrow’s morning check-in but may have a family matter to cover; Tera and Alan will be prepared to discuss. Thanks

<https://nbc25news.com/news/local/as-benton-harbor-faces-water-crisis-mayor-seeks-advice-from-flint-leaders>

## As Benton Harbor faces water crisis, mayor seeks advice from Flint leaders

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by Bria Jones

Wednesday, September 29th 2021

FLINT, Mich. -- The mayor of Benton Harbor — a small predominately Black city in the southwestern part of the state — says the city is facing a water crisis similar to the city of Flint.

Wednesday, Benton Harbor Mayor Marcus Muhammad met with Mayor Sheldon Neeley as public works staff members and local doctors.

Muhammad told Mid-Michigan NOW exclusively he accepted Mayor Neeley's invitation to come to Flint because he wanted to learn from the city's trial and error with the water crisis.

He said the Benton Harbor, a city with about 10,000 people has been experiencing high lead levels in water for several years.

Right now, he said they're meeting with Governor Gretchen Whitmer and have received millions in funding on the state and federal levels.

Muhammad said he's hoping this conversation in Flint, will help him better understand how to manage the situation.

"My number one priority is public safety so anything injurious or that is harmful to the people it is my responsibility to make sure we address that issue, and me coming to Flint is a step in that direction," said Benton Harbor Mayor Marcus Muhammad.

"We have a humanitarian effort we have to put forth in the state of Michigan especially for black and brown communities that have been devastated by environmental injustices. Now, we have a duty and responsibility to provide a level of leadership as it relates to these issues as it relates to lead and drinking water," said Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley.

Muhammad said the city is now replacing service lines, and hopes to have problems fixed 12-18 months.

Cheryl L. Newton  
Acting Regional Administrator/Deputy Regional Administrator, R5  
312-353-6730

